

**April 14, 2019 - Num 14:11-45 - Curse on the Wilderness Generation**  
**Torah Reading: Numbers 14:11-45 - Curse on the Wilderness Generation**  
**Psalm 101**  
**Haftarah: Isaiah 52:5-12 + 54:7-8**

**God offers to start over again with Moses**

**Numbers 14:11-12** - "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they."

**Moses Intercedes for the people / A Type of Christ**

**Numbers 14:13-14** - "And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night."

Rashi - They will say that against them You were able to fight, but against the inhabitants of the Land You were unable to fight.

i.e. the nations will slander Your ability

**The Intercession:**

**Numbers 14:17** - "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,"

The first letter in the word for "great" here is larger than usual, that it might be taken notice of; and to signify the exceeding greatness of the power of God, Moses desired might be displayed in this case: and the letter numerically signifies ten, and has been thought to respect the ten times that Israel tempted the Lord, Numbers 14:22, and to suggest, that though they had so done, yet the grace and mercy of God should ten times exceed the ingratitude of the people - (Baal Hatturim in loc. & Buxtorf. Tiberias, c. 14. p. 38.)

**Numbers 14:18-19** - "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

Rashi - "The Lord is slow to anger": [both] towards the righteous and towards the wicked. When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy One, blessed is He, sitting

and writing, "The Lord is slow to anger." He said to Him, "Towards the righteous?" The Holy One, blessed is He, answered him, "Even toward the wicked" He [Moses] said to Him, "Let the wicked perish!" He said to him, "By your life, you will have need for this [patience for the wicked]. When Israel sinned at [the incident of] the [golden] calf and at the [time of the] spies, Moses prayed before Him [making mention of] "slow to anger." The Holy One, blessed is He, replied to Him, Did you not tell me "Toward the righteous"? He [Moses] responded, But did You not reply to me, "Even toward the wicked"? - [Sanh. 111a]

Compare Christ as intercessor - (**Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, I John 2:1**)

**Numbers 14:20** - "And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word"

The Jerusalem Targum has, "and the Word of the Lord said, lo, I have remitted and forgiven according to thy word" which must be understood of Christ, the essential Word.

Rashi - "in accordance with your word: Because of what you said, namely, "They might say that God lacks the ability..."

But this was not a full pardon, because He only walked back His intention to kill them immediately, "as one man." They were still all cursed. They would live out their remaining years in the wilderness, die natural deaths but not inherit the Promised Land:

### The Generation is Cursed

**Numbers 14:21-23** - "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:"

### Ten Times

Twice at the sea, **Exodus 14:11**; twice concerning water, **Exodus 15:23**; twice about manna, **Exodus 16:2**; twice about quails, **Exodus 16:12**; once by the golden calf, **Exodus 32:1**; and once in the wilderness of Paran, **Numbers 14:1**, which last and tenth was the present temptation. (Babylonian Talmud, Eracin, fol. 15. 1. Bartenora in Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 4.)

"But as truly as I live" - God is swearing, expressing an oath. The Targum says the Lord swears by his life, or by himself, because he could swear by no greater.

Rashi - They will not see the land, yet My glory shall fill the entire earth, so that My Name shall not be desecrated through this plague by [people] saying "Since God lacked the ability to bring them." For I shall not kill them suddenly, as one man, but gradually, over a period of forty years.

- **Isaiah 6:3** - "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Armies; his glory fills the whole earth."

- **Hebrews 3:13-19** - "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

The people had feared that their children would be a prey to the Canaanites (Numbers 14:3). Now God says they will be the ones to inherit the land instead of their parents. Those who were saying the land would "swallow them up" would be swallowed up by the sand of the wilderness.

**Numbers 14:24** - "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."

Caleb was filled and guided by the Holy Spirit. while the spies were filled with the spirit of the evil one, " ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience." (**Ephesians 2:2**)

**Numbers 14:25** - "(Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea."

Though these people had so sadly provoked the Lord, yet such was his goodness to them, that He warned them of the design of their enemies, and of the danger by them, to provide for their safety. Later, (See **Numbers 14:40**) they disobey His direction in a vain attempt to cover their sin by "going up" to take the Land - too late.

**Numbers 14:26-35** - **God restates His case against the complaining generation**

**Numbers 14:27** - "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me."

**Numbers 14:28-29** - "Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness..."

The Jews understand this not of the whole congregation of Israel, but of the ten spies, from whence they gather, that ten make a congregation or minyan; and they interpret the phrase, "which murmur against me", transitively, "which cause [Israel] to murmur against me." But all the people are included from twenty years old and upward,

excluding the Levites.

**Numbers 14:31** - "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

"despised" = *m'astem*, from *ma'ac* - suggests a visceral rejection, physically the vomiting reflex. Revulsion, abhorance.

Prophetically used for Israel's rejection of Messiah:

- **Psalms 118:22** - "The stone which the builders refused (*ma'ac*) is become the head stone of the corner."

... and for God's rejection of the Jewish nation:

- **Hosea 9:17** - "My God will cast them away (*ma'ac*), because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

...and for dying to self:

- **Job 42:6** - "Wherefore I abhor (*ma'ac*) myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

In fact, there is a Talmudic tradition that Moses wrote down the story of Job himself, because of his own sufferings from dealing with the recalcitrant Children of Israel in the wilderness.

See **Numbers 14:28-29** - "Say unto them"

God tells Moses to explain to the people His decision of judgment. This is Job's predicament - how to understand the inscrutable and unfathomable justice of God - *middat ha-din*. To the children of Israel, their situation feels unjust and wrong.

The word "say" is "*amar*" - in the Zohar this word is often translated "whisper."

In this case, the people were clearly rebellious. But what about Job's situation?

You cannot lecture someone in the grip of profound confusion and grief about God's goodness. "Whisper" to such sufferers that even in the grip of experiences of loss and lack - of *middat ha-din* - that they should avoid resentment, because God's intentions, even when He behaves inscrutably, are profoundly benevolent. (Mei Ha-Shilo'ach, A Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef of Isbitza, 1800-1854, vol. 1 to Parshat Tissa)

**Numbers 14:34** - "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

They will wander - going from place to place as shepherds do in search of pasture - for forty years - after the number of the days in which ye searched the land - reckoned from their coming out of Egypt a year and a half previously.

Septuagint: "ye shall know the fury of my anger"

They will know by sad experience the evil of complaining and murmuring against God.

### **The Original Spies who brought an evil report died in the Plague**

**Numbers 14:36-37** - "And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD."

Some say worms came out of their navels, and up to their jaws, and ate them and their tongues; and others that they came out of their tongues, and entered their navels, which they take to be a just retaliation for sinning with their tongues. (Schulchan Aruch, par. 1. c. 580. sect. 2. Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 7. 2.)

### **A Self-Conceived Plan - Disobedient Pseudo-repentance**

The people "mourned" but this was the sorrow of the word, not true repentance.

- **Corinthians 7:10** - "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

- **Hebrews 12:15-17** - "[Esau] was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."

**Numbers 14:40** - "And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned."

**Numbers 14:42** - "Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies."

The rabbis were puzzled by this. Wasn't this what God wanted in the first place? This seemed like a genuine act of repentance. Why were the gates of repentance shut against them now?

But once sentence had been passed on them, true repentance would only manifest through acceptance, humbling themselves and submitting to God's decision.

They put their plan to "go up" before their admitting to their sin.

### **Presumption took the place of Repentance**

**Numbers 14:44** - "But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp."

"presumed" - they acted in arrogant, insolent defiance

The Targum of Jonathan adds, "the ark, and the tabernacle, and the cloud of glory moved not."

### **Addendum: Causeless Weeping and the Fast of Ab**

The weeping of the Children of Israel at the evil report of the spies was what the Talmud calls "weeping for nothing."

**See Numbers 14:1** - "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night."

Israel had wept on the night of the ninth of Ab, and God had said to them: You have wept a causeless weeping before Me. I shall therefore arrange for you a permanent weeping for future generations. At that hour it was decreed that the Temple should be destroyed and that Israel should be exiled among the nations; for so Scripture says, "Therefore He lifted up His hand and swore concerning them, that He would overthrow them in the wilderness; and that He would cast out their seed among the nations, and scatter them in the lands (**Psalm 106:26**) The "lifted hand" was retribution for the "lifted voice." (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:20)